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INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW INTERIM CABINET AND SELECT BIOS

REF: BANGKOK 6080

11. (U) Interim PM Surayud Chulanont announced his cabinet over the weekend and received the King's royal endorsement on October 9. Dubbed the "cabinet of old men," the 26-member interim cabinet have been tasked to improve Thailand's image abroad. They are as follows:

Deputy PM and Finance Minister: Pridiyathorn DEVAKULA  
Deputy PM and Industry Minister: Kosit PANPIEMRAS  
Minister to PM's Office: Tipawadee MEKSAWAN  
Minister to PM's Office: Thirapat SERIRANGSAN  
Minister of Defense: General Boonrawd SOMTHAS  
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Nitya PIBULSONGRAM  
Minister of Commerce: Krirkkrai JIRAPAET  
Minister of Energy: Piyasvasti AMRANAND  
Minister of Interior: Ari WONG-ARAYA  
Minister of Transportation: Adm. Thira HAOCHAROEN  
Minister of Justice: Chanchai LIKHITJITTA  
Minister of Labor: Apai CHANTHANAJULAKA  
Minister of Agriculture: Theera SUTABU  
Minister of Education: Wijit SRISA-ARN  
Minister of Culture: Khaisri SRI-ARON  
Minister of Science and Tech: Yongyuth YUTHAWONGSE  
Minister of Public Health: Mongkol NA SONGKHLA  
Minister of Environment: Kasem SANITWONG NA AYUTTHAYA  
Minister of Information Tech: Sitthichai POKAI-UDOM  
Minister of Tourism and Sports: Suwit YODMANEE  
Minister of Social Development: Paibool WATANASIRITHAM  
Deputy Foreign Minister: Chaowanit KONGSIRI  
Deputy Interior Minister: Banyat CHANSENA  
Deputy Transport Minister: Sansern WONGCHA-RUN  
Deputy Industry Minister: Piyabutr CHOLWICHARN

12. (U) Bios for select interim ministers are listed below. Reftel provides bio background on economic ministries. Septel provides initial analysis of the new cabinet.

13. (SBU) GENERAL BOONRAWD SOMTHAS - INTERIM DEFENSE MINISTER: Born November 17, 1941.

A former classmate of PM Surayud (Armed Forces Preparatory School (Class 1), CRMA (Class 12)), Boonrawd served as Surayud's Chief of Staff when Surayud became the Army Commander-in-Chief (CINC) from 2000-01. He served as the Chief of Staff for the Royal Thai Supreme Commander from 2001 until he reached the mandatory retirement age of sixty a year later. It is unclear what Boonrawd has been doing since retirement.

Experience:

Few details are known about Boonrawd's early career other than he volunteered for Special Forces training in the late 1960s along with Surayud and a few other Class 12 classmates.

October 1989 - March 1991 -- Commander of the First Special Forces Regiment, First Special Force Division, Royal Thai Army (RTA).

April 1991 - March 1992 -- Aide to the Minister of Defense.

April 1992 - September 1993 -- Commander of the Second Special Forces Division, RTA.

October 1993 - September 1995 -- Deputy Commander of the RTA Special Warfare Command.

October 1995 - March 1996 -- Expert attached to the Headquarters (HQ) RTA.

April 1996 - September 1997 -- Senior Specialist Attached to HQ RTA as Lt. General.

October 1997 - March 1999 -- Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, RTA.

April 1999 - September 2000 -- Deputy Chief of Staff, RTA.

October 2000 - September 2001 -- Chief of Staff, RTA.

October 2001 - September 2002 -- Chief of Staff, Royal Thai Supreme Command.

Retired from active duty September 30, 2002.

#### Promotions:

Major General -- April 1991

Lt. General -- May 1996

Full General -- October 2000

He worked on the Khmer Resistance with both RTA Special Forces (1980s) with the Special Warfare Command First Special Forces Division (with Surayud) and later as the Chief of RTA Special Operations Element 315. Boonrawd was a long-time Embassy contact. He has been considered pro-American, although he had also maintained close personal connections to

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French military and commercial business contacts.

14. (SBU) NITYA PIBULSONGRAM -- INTERIM FOREIGN MINISTER: Born June 30, 1941.

Former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and career diplomat who once served as the Thai Ambassador to the US), Nitya was Chief Negotiator for the Thailand-US FTA from July 2004 to January 2006. After his retirement from the Foreign Service in September 2001, he was appointed as Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Surakiart Sathirathai) and served in the post until January 2005. He was named Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister (Surakiart Sathirathai) in March 2005 and remained in this position until the end of the second Thaksin Administration in early 12006.

Prior to his MFA Permanent Secretary term (February 2000 to September 2001), Nitya served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United States (1996-2000), Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations (1988-1996), and Director-General of the Department of International Organizations of the MFA (1983-1987). He was appointed to the Deputy Director-General of the Information Department in 1980, and a year later switched to the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Political Affairs. He was once appointed ambassador-at-large in the Foreign Ministry, in charge of special political issues. He began his career in Thailand's Foreign Service in 1968.

Born in Bangkok, Nitya received his BA in Government from Dartmouth College and his MA in Political Science from Brown University. He is married to Pacharin (Patricia) Osmond.

15. (SBU) ARI WONG-ARAYA -- INTERIM INTERIOR MINISTER: Born February 1935.

Born a Muslim in Bangkok, Ari obtained his BA in Political Science from Chulalongkorn University in 1959, a MS in Community Development and Certificate of Presidential

Assistant in Community Development from University of the Philippines (College of Agriculture at Los Banos), and a MS in Public Administration from University of Missouri (Columbia). He also attended the National Defense College, Class 27.

Ari began his career in Ministry of Interior as a police constable in 1960 before moving to Department of Community Development in 1962, to which he became Director of Operations in 1969. From 1976 to 1984, Ari was governor to Satun, Saraburi, Prachinburi, and Suphanburi provinces. Ari was appointed the Deputy Interior Perm.-Sec. twice--in 1988 and 1991. He was Director-General of Land Department in 1990, and named the Interior Perm.-Sec. in 1993 before his retirement in 1996.

Ari's rise to higher ranks was attributed by some to his wide connections with politicians. Ari is said to be close to the ex-PM Gen. Chawalit Yongchaiyut and the ex-PM Banhan Sinlapa-acha; he does not enjoy a good relationship with the Democrat Party. He is reportedly favored by the Crown Prince.

In October 2004, Ari joined Thaksin Shinawatra's first administration as the Deputy Education Minister. He served in that post until March 2005. He resigned from the Thai-Rak-Thai (TRT) Party shortly after his tenure in Thaksin's cabinet to become the President of the Islamic Bank of Thailand, but encouraged his son, Ekkaphot, to enter politics under the TRT ticket in 2005. His son was elected as a MP from Bangkok in 2005 and remains in the TRT today. Ari is also a Board Member of the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand.

16. (SBU) CHANCHAI LIKHITJITTA -- INTERIM JUSTICE MINISTER:  
Born April 25, 1946.

Chanchai graduated from Ban Somdet Chaophaya Teachers, College (currently known as Rajabhat University) in education, and later received an LL.B. (Hons.) from Thammasat University (1969). He also received a Barrister-at-Law from the Institute of Legal Education, the Thai Bar in 1971. Chanchai was a career judge to the Court of Justice. He has climbed up through the ranks until becoming President of the Supreme Court of Justice in October 2005 before reaching his retirement in September 2006. His significant posts in the past included Presiding Judge of the Civil Court, Justice of the Court of Appeal, Justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of the Juvenile and Family Division of the Court of Appeal, Presiding Justice of the Supreme Court, and Vice

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President of the Supreme Court.  
After his retirement, Chanchai was appointed to his current post as Senior Judge to the Thongburi District Civil Court.

17. (SBU) ADM THIRA HAOCHAROEN - INTERIM TRANSPORTATION  
MINISTER: Born April 6, 1940

Admiral Thira is not well-known to the embassy. At this point, we are able to provide only the following background:

#### Educational Background

1963 -- Naval Academy, Royal Thai Navy (RTN)  
1975 -- Naval Staff College, Royal Thai Navy  
1982 -- Naval Command College, Naval War College -- US  
1990 -- Naval War College, Royal Thai Navy  
1994 -- National Defense College

#### Career

1975- -Commanding Officer, HTMS. Chang  
1978- -Aide-de-Camp to the Commander-in-Chief  
1984- -Staff Officer to the Commander-in-Chief  
1986- -Thai Naval Attache -- Washington D.C.  
1990- -Chief, Naval Secretariat  
1992- -Deputy Commandant, Naval Academy

1993- -Commandant, Naval War College  
1994- -Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics  
1995- -Deputy Chief of Staff  
1996- -Chief of Staff  
1997- -RTN Deputy Commander-in-Chief  
1998- -RTN Commander-in-Chief  
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